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DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL

FOR THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

Vol. 1. #1-12
complete

Promote, as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of Knowledge.—WASHINGTON.

VOL. 1.]

GENEVA, MARCH 25, 1840.

[NO. 1.]

DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL.

FRANCIS DWIGHT, Editor.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION.—For a single copy, \$1 per annum, payable on issuing the second number. Subscriptions should be returned by the 20th of April, that the Editors may know whether the work will be sustained. If it be, the second number will appear on the 1st of May, in an improved form, and the subsequent numbers on the 1st of each succeeding month.

All Letters and Communications must be Post-paid.

DECISIONS & COMMUNICATIONS, by the Superintendent of Common Schools.

The Trustees of School District No. 9, of the towns of Kingsbury and Fort Ann, against the Trustees of District No. 6, Kingsbury, in Washington County.

Lands intersected by the boundaries of a district at the time of making out the tax-list, are to be assessed to the owner in the district where he resides, if they form a part of the farm on which he resides, and are possessed and cultivated by him as one property, without reference to the ownership of the property at the time of the formation of the district.

In this case it appears that Asahel Vaughan, a resident of School District No. 6, and whose farm extends into District No. 9, and was intersected by the boundary line of said districts at the time of their formation, has since purchased a lot of 30 acres, lying wholly in No. 9, but cornering on the land formerly owned by him, separated from it only by a public highway, and cultivated wholly by himself. It also appears that Mr. Vaughan has purchased another lot of 22 acres in No. 9 adjacent to his farm in No. 6, and separated from it only by the boundary line of the district, which he also cultivates as a part of his farm. A similar case is also presented in reference to lands supposed to belong to Hiram Mason, a resident of No. 6, and the purchaser of lands in No. 9, adjacent to his farm, and separated from it by the district line. These purchases were all made since the organization of the districts; and the decision of the Superintendent is requested as to the right of District No. 6, to include the lands so purchased in a tax-list made out in said district for Common School purposes.

It is with great regret and some hesitation that I dissent from the opinions of my predecessors in cases similar to those now presented; not only from respect to them, but from a desire to preserve uniformity in the construction and administration of the law. Still I am obliged to decide according to the convictions of my own judgment. Those opinions proceed on the principle that the boundaries of School Districts cannot be altered by purchases subsequent to the organization of such districts. This is perfectly sound. The districts must and will remain the same as to territory, until altered by the Commissioners. But I do not perceive how the purchase of a lot of land can alter the boundaries of a district. By the decision at page 24, Common School decisions, &c., it is admitted that if a district line runs through a man's farm he is to be taxed

for his whole farm in the district where he resides. This, therefore, shows that territorial limits and taxable jurisdiction are not identical, but may be different. The question presented is one of taxation, and must be governed by § 86 (76) of the School law, which renders liable to taxation all the taxable property of an inhabitant owned or possessed by him, "at the time of making out the list within the district, or which being intersected by the boundaries of the district, shall be so owned or possessed partly in such district and partly in any adjoining district." The law does not recognize the distinction taken by my respected predecessor, that in the formation of a district, a boundary line through a farm shall not separate it into two parts for different districts. It does not refer to the time of formation, or to the fact that a part has previously been in another district, but adopts as the only test, the state of things existing at the time the tax-list is made out, without enquiring how they were previously.

The only consequence is, that so much in value of property is taxed in another district, while the property itself remains in the district to which it previously belonged. If it should be sold to a person residing on it, it would again become taxable in that district. I am therefore of opinion, that the property purchased by Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Mason, in District No. 9, if it forms a part of their respective farms in district No. 6, in which they reside, is taxable only in the latter district. If the former district is in consequence seriously weakened in its taxable property, the remedy is with the Commissioners of Common Schools, who may enlarge or alter its boundaries whenever in their opinion, such a measure is required by the interests of those concerned.

The Trustees of District No. 6, are therefore hereby authorized to include in any tax-list for Common School purposes the lands above referred to forming part of the farms owned and cultivated by residents of said District No. 6, and intersected by the boundary line of the District at the time of making out said list.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. June 12, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER,
Sup. of Com. Schools.

In the Appeal of the Trustees of District No. 3, in the town of Bennington, against the apportionment of public money by the Commissioners of Common Schools of said town. Genesee County.

The term residence in its application to questions arising in School Districts, is synonymous with inhabitant; and both terms import a permanent, fixed abode in contradistinction to a temporary stay.

The residence of the children is that of the parents.

The facts of this case seem to be the following: Previous to Oct. 1838 Asher Canfield resided in district No. 3, upon a farm which

he had rented for two or three years. In that month he went with his wife and two children into district No. 6, to attend a mill upon a contract he had made to take charge of the mill from the 25th of October to the first of April ensuing, leaving six of his children on the premises he had rented, four of whom attended the school there. He returned to his residence in No. 3, in February, 1839. The Trustees of district No. 3 reported four of the children as in their district; and district No. 6 reported the same number as being in their district, and the Commissioners struck them out of the report of district No. 3, and apportioned the public money which would be their share to district No. 6. From this apportionment the appeal is made. The case turns entirely upon the question, where was the legal residence of Mr. Canfield on the last of December, 1838? For there is no doubt of the correctness of the principle, that the residence of the children is that of the father. The term resident is legally synonymous with inhabitant; and both terms import a permanent, fixed abode, in contradistinction to a temporary stay.—It seems agreed that previous to October, Canfield was a resident of district No. 3. A residence once acquired continues until a new one is obtained. The fact of his going with his wife and two children into district No. 6, is of itself scarcely sufficient to constitute a residence there. The slight presumption of a change of residence raised by that removal is explained and entirely rebutted by the other facts in the case; that he had at the time a farm in district No. 3, which he had hired for two or three years, that he left a part of his family on the premises thus rented by him, and that he returned to them on the expiration of his term to tend the mill. These facts show that there was not a new residence acquired, that the intent to return remained, and that his former residence continued.—Had the districts been in different towns, I cannot doubt that he would have been a legal voter in that town in which district No. 3 was situated. The point is somewhat intricate; and the mistake of the Commissioners affords no cause of censure. Their apportionment as respects the four children of Asher Canfield, is reversed; and they are directed, if the money remains in their hands, to pay over the share which would belong to those children, to the Trustees of district No. 3. If the money has been paid to district No. 6, then the Commissioners will deduct the amount from the sum that may be apportioned to district No. 6, in 1840, and pay it over to the Trustees of No. 3, in addition to the amount they may be entitled to receive upon their next annual report. They will also notify the Trustees of No. 3, of this decision, and allow them to take a copy.

Given under my hand and the seal of office of the Secretary of State. July 15, 1839.

JOHN C. SPENCER,
Sup. of Com. Schools.

(ANONYMOUS)

Where the Annual Report of the Trustees of a District does not show a compliance on the part of the district with the conditions which entitle it to a share of the public money, the Commissioners cannot pay to the district any portion of such money, without rendering themselves liable to their successors for the amount so paid.

If the report shows a compliance with the law, though false in point of fact, the Commissioners would be justifiable in paying over such money, although the Trustees making such false report would subject themselves to a penalty of \$25 each, to be sued for by the supervisor.

In the latter case, the Commissioners might bring an action against the Trustees for receiving the money under a false representation of facts, for money had and received, and recover back the amount paid, in their name of office. It seems, however, that in the former case, as no mistake in fact exists, and no misrepresentation is made, the amount illegally paid by the Commissioners could not be recovered of the Trustees.

By J. C. SPENCER, Aug. 12, 1839.—The question at the close of your letter involves a point of great magnitude and perhaps some difficulty. My opinion on it is merely that of an individual, until the question is submitted to me by an appeal which might be brought by the Commissioners against the Trustees after demanding the re-payment of the money.

As the authority of the Commissioners is specific and limited by law, and they are forbidden to pay the School moneys unless it appears by the Report from the District that the moneys received the preceding year have been applied to the payment of a qualified teacher, Sec. 23, [24,] if they have paid when the Report did not contain such a statement, they have paid illegally and are themselves liable to their successors for the amount in the same manner as if they retained it in their hands. If the Report did contain the statement required, then the Commissioners are justified, but the Trustees are each of them liable to a penalty of \$25, to be sued for by the Supervisor, and as the money was paid on a false representation, the Commissioners or their successors can recover it back in an action for money had and received. But if it did not contain the statement, I doubt whether the Commissioners can recover it back, as there was no mistake in fact and no misrepresentation. But on that point I do not feel positive. I assume that in the case you mention, the Report was correct in form and complied with the law, and in such case it is undoubtedly the duty of the Commissioners to proceed to call back the money either by demand and appeal to the Superintendent, or by action.

(ANONYMOUS)

A Trustee cannot be Librarian of a District, as the two offices are incompatible with each other. Where no Librarian is chosen by the inhabitants, the District Clerk must act as such until the annual meeting.

By J. C. SPENCER, Nov. 25, 1839.—Upon principles on which it has heretofore been decided that a Trustee could not be a Collector of a District, viz. the incompatibility of the offices, I think a Trustee cannot be a Librarian of a District. The Librarian is under the charge of the Trustees, and responsible to them; and there is a manifest incongruity in making a person responsible to himself. As the District has not, in effect, chosen a Librarian, the District Clerk must act as such until the next annual meeting.

Books must be full of the "seeds of things;" rich in living germs of thought; they must suggest hints, rather than supply ideas; they must be, as Milton says, "not absolutely dead things, but contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was, whose progeny they are."

GREGG.

DISTRICT SCHOOL JOURNAL.

GENEVA, MARCH 25, 1840.

PROSPECTUS.

While so many journals, daily, weekly and monthly, are advocating the claims of contending parties in politics, or of the different religious sects into which the Christian world is unhappily divided, or are labouring to advance the general interests of learning and science, or to amuse with the lighter effusions of literature—it can need no apology to add one to the small number of those which are devoted to the interests of District Schools—those most important nurseries of our republican liberties, and of our national prosperity. Ten thousand such Schools exist in the State of New-York! How important that they should be well conducted, and made to conduce, in the highest practical degree to their great ends. Two millions of the public money are annually and most wisely devoted to their support! How important that the people, should receive their own with interest, in the real and substantial improvement of their children, and their preparation for the business of life—and the State, in their preparation to discharge intelligently and faithfully the duties of good citizens.

The influence of the periodical press in protecting the liberties of the people, is universally admitted. May it not equally conduce to their better information, and the securing of their deep domestic interests, which are yet the interests of the country and of liberty itself—in the education of their children. Education may be well or badly conducted, and the District School may impart a sound and good education, which may give dignity to the character, and lay a foundation for continued improvement, or it may be misdirected, and accomplish nothing either for the present or the future. To render such service in this great cause, as we may be able, is our aim; and we gladly devote to it such ability as long and varied experience and a familiar acquaintance with, and careful observation of, District Schools, may have given.

The real origin of this paper is, however, to be found in the following extract from the late Report of the Superintendent of Com. Schools:

Intending to avail himself of the opportunity that will be presented, when he comes to submit to the Legislature the results of the reports of the county visitors, to present plans for the improvement and better organization of the Common Schools, as he is required by law, the Superintendent will now advert only to one subject, which he deems worthy the consideration of the Legislature. There are no means of diffusing information to the School Districts, of the alterations in the laws or regulations, or of directions upon questions of great practical importance, but through the ordinary newspapers, or by circulars transmitted from this office. The expenses of printing and postage, on these circulars, is great, and they often fail to reach the persons interested. In Massachusetts, Connecticut and Michigan, there are journals devoted exclusively to the promotion of Common School education. They are conducted under the superintendence of the officers charged with that subject, and are made the organs of communicating to the subordinate officers, to teachers, and to the inhabitants of districts, the various information so necessary to the correct discharge of their duties, and to prevent disputes and litigation. They contain, also, valuable essays upon reforms and improvements of the system, and discussions on various topics connected with education, calculated to awaken attention to the subject, and produce a more active and vigorous spirit in forwarding the cause. There can be no doubt that a similar Journal in this State might be made eminently useful in the same way, and it would certainly relieve this department from a very severe labor—that of answering inquiries as to the duties of officers, and resolving doubts and difficulties. Although the time of the Superintendent could not be spared to provide essays or selections for its columns, to any great extent, yet a general superintendence could be exercised, and with the aid of a competent editor, it may be made most efficient. Such an editor can be obtained; and if the Legis-

ture authorize the Superintendent to subscribe for copies sufficient for all the School Districts of the State, and for each board of town commissioners, at an expense not exceeding \$2,500, there is reason to believe the attempt will be immediately made to publish a Monthly Journal of the character described. In the opinion of the Superintendent, the necessary sum may be applied from the surplus income of the United States Deposits Fund, without inconvenience; and its application to such a purpose will contribute, in his judgment, to an improved administration of our Common School system.

JOHN C. SPENCER.

The first place in this Journal will always be given to the decisions of the Superintendent, and the official information to School Districts, of which he speaks, in the above extract.

Besides these, it will be the endeavor of the Editor to furnish such other matter from his own pen, by the communication of his friends and the friends of the cause, and by selections, as will most promote the ends of such a Journal.

We shall take care to make known all valuable improvements in the means and methods of Common School instruction, of foreign and domestic origin, and omit nothing within the compass of such a Journal which, in our judgment, can be useful to parents, teachers and pupils, in reference to this important subject.

But while advocating earnestly all real improvements, we shall endeavour to repress empirical attempts at improvement, which have too much abounded, oppose all changes which in our judgment, would be pernicious, and the profane efforts of speculation to turn the zeal of the people on this subject to private profit. On this latter point, to speak more clearly, we have no connexion and shall have no connexion with publishers of School books, and so far as we may have occasion to speak of such books, we shall do it unbiassed by the enticements of interest, and shall commend or censure, as in our view justice may require. And we will be content, too, in the conduct of this Journal, to labour within our sphere, and while we endeavour assiduously and earnestly to promote the great ends of popular education, we shall refrain scrupulously from all intermeddling with party politics, or interference with the peculiar opinions of any religious denomination.

The \$2500, asked in the above extract from the Report of the Superintendent, is for the gratuitous circulation of the Decisions and Communications of the Department. The Journal depends on the public for its support; and should a sufficient subscription be obtained to secure us from loss, its publication will be continued in an uniform and handsome type, on fine paper, and enriched by a greater variety of original and selected matter. The present number is published under peculiar disadvantages, and is not a specimen, either in type or paper, of the publication. With the aid of some of the ablest writers of the day, we hope to make it useful in the great cause of general education, but if we have mistaken our zeal for ability, we shall willingly lay down our pen for a more retired sphere of duty.

The Rev. D. M. SMITH, Secretary of the New-York State Education Society, is the Agent of this Journal.

N. B. Postmasters are authorized to remit subscription money free of postage.

"To give a right moral direction to the minds of children, we must have true Christian morality taught in our schools. The morality of the heart. The morality which springs from a consciousness of duty, a sense of right. We mean that we would not only have the young taught to appear good, but also to be good. That we would not only have them see virtue, but possess it. We would cultivate those higher capacities which God has implanted in every mind."

On some proposed changes in the Inspection of Common Schools.

"From the reports of 1837, it appears that only 5013 Districts were inspected at all during the year, leaving 5570 that were not visited. There has been a slight improvement in this respect in 1838; but still in that year more than one-half of all the districts, were not inspected. This lamentable neglect is one of the greatest evils under which the system labors. It has been endeavored during the past year to mitigate it by the appointment of visitors in the different counties, under the authority given by the act of the last session."—*Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools.*

We propose to consider the cause and the remedy of this evil. Our object is not the eulogium, but the improvement of the system, and instead of juggling attention by descending on its merits, we would show that we feel its value by pointing out the defects which limit and impair its influence.

There are in the State, Ten Thousand Seven Hundred and Six School Districts, and all require watchful and fostering care. Some are disturbed by local dissensions, some degraded by faithless teachers, some enfeebled by private schools, and almost all suffering from the negligence of parents, the heedlessness of trustees, and the inattention of inspectors.—The Superintendent can neither prevent nor remedy many of these evils, nor does the law require such impossibilities at his hands. These important duties are devolved on the Inspectors, the local executive of the system; it is their office "to examine and approve teachers, to inspect schools, to advise and direct the course of study," and on their fidelity the uniform and vigorous action of the system mainly depends.

And we deeply regret that a trust so sacred should so often be betrayed. Of the two thousand four hundred and thirty-nine inspectors scattered among the towns of the State, not one-twentieth part appreciate and discharge as they should, the responsibilities of their office! (1) And yet who has a right to censure them? Can we expect our fellow-citizens to perform an onerous, perplexing and gratuitous service! We say *gratuitous*, for the law, while it allows, gives no compensation; and though custom has in most towns amended it, yet the pittance granted,—not averaging more than \$30 per annum,—is no remuneration to him, who does his duty.—Surely, from an officer so paid, it is unreasonable to expect, that constant interruption and sacrifice of his own regular business, that zealous devotion to the wants and difficulties of the various schools, and that thorough knowledge of the means of education, which alone can secure one tithe of the due benefit of our system. We find therefore little reason to censure the Inspectors. We wish they had voluntarily discharged their sacred trust, but the people who thrust these duties upon them, have no right to condemn their omission—the condemnation rightly belongs to that grave error of our system, in relying on the *voluntary principle* for these essential services. A principle undemocratic in its nature, as none but those in easy circumstances can act on it;—inconsistent with the system, as the law entrusts important duties to the Inspectors, without any power to hold them responsible for their neglect; and impotent in its action,—as New-England and New-York bear ample testimony. Let us then correct the evil, and no longer jeopard the best interests of society, on grounds that have proved a quicksand to our hopes.

The great question, "what will remedy the evil?" now claims attention; and we rejoice that in attempting to answer it, we are not under the necessity of broaching any novelty of our own, but merely of giving form and utterance to suggestions from various parts of the State.

It is proposed to abolish the office of Inspector of Common Schools, and create in its place that of Curator; and to devolve on this officer the duty of superintending, inspecting and reporting the condition of the schools, uniting in him the various duties of Inspector and Visitor. Let there be one of these officers in every county; and authorize the Supervisors to apportion the large counties among two or more according to that ratio which will best subserve the interests of education, having reference always to the principle, that to each Curator so many districts be allotted as will make their charge necessarily his principal, and not his incidental business, or we shall fall back into the inefficiency of the present system. Make this Curator with the boards of school commissioners, the examining Committees, and require their joint signature to the validity of all teacher's certificates, that a uniform and rising standard of qualification may be established. Require him also to visit every school district and school, at least four times during the year. At the opening of the several school terms, he should counsel the teacher how to interest and guide the faculties of his pupils, and confer with the trustees on the best means of awakening the co-operation and interest of the parents,—adopting the plans to be adhered to during the term. At the close of the school term, let him attend its public examination, and at that time in the presence of trustees and parents, briefly and candidly pronounce on the faults and merits of each class, pointing out the causes of failure or of success;—meting out to the teacher, kindly but firmly, censure if censure be necessary, and commendation when deserved. In this manner life and vigor will be breathed into

this great system, and the people's schools be made the pride, the hope and the strength of the land. Give us but faithful Curators, and but few years will pass, before every child in this State is secured such an education as will tend to make him useful, respected and happy. We speak advisedly; we know the low condition of our schools, but we also know their capacity for improvement; we remember the necessity of having highly educated teachers, but we have also seen what devotion to duty can accomplish in the indifferently qualified, when sustained and cheered in their labors by constant visitation. In the words of Cousin, "visitation is indeed, the life of the school," and if it can be secured, that which is now rarely accomplished, by the irregular and occasional efforts of individuals, will become uniform, constant and progressive in every district in the State.

Regarding this proposed reform in another point of view,—the relation these Curators may bear to the Superintendent, both as his deputies and as a Board of Education. At home, in their several Circuits, they will diffuse the views, obey the orders and carry out the plans of the Superintendent;—collecting and communicating information, averting difficulties, allaying dissensions, correcting errors and confirming improvements;—ever instructed and ever instructing. And when the year has thus revolved round, let them in obedience to the requisition of the Superintendent, assemble at Albany to present their annual Reports, that they may compare their various experience, open and advocate their plans for future action, and receive counsel and direction from the Head of the Department. Thus union, zeal and strength will be inspired, and the rich experience of the past, be made the monitor of the present, and a blessing to the future. Such an organization would be indeed effective, nerving with new vigor the arm of the Department, and enabling it to foster, advance and confirm improvement in every school in the State.

But admitting this change to be a reform, it will still be met in some minds by the test question of the day, "will it pay?" Not by preventing vice and strengthening virtue; not by enkindling the energies of the heart, cheering the mind with the light of knowledge, and guiding the hand with the skill of intelligence. This is all very well, but a reform must pay in another coin than this, if it would secure the support of the purse and the till. It must save money to the State. And as difficult as it is to estimate the pecuniary value of generous sentiments, sound knowledge and kind feelings, we will undertake to satisfy even the cent-per-cent philanthropist, if any such there be, that whatever will give efficiency to our school system, will also save money to the citizen and the State.

We assume that the Supervisors are authorized to allow one dollar and twenty-five cents for every school visited, superintended and reported according to this project, and that not more than four inspections of any one School District shall be paid for. This is to be the entire compensation for all the incidental duties of the office, and though not ample, is, we believe, sufficient to secure the services of efficient Curators. Supposing, then, that every District is so visited, the charge for the 10,706 Districts will be \$63,530, as the entire cost of this local executive.

What now is the expense of our existing Board of Inspectors? Owing to the returns to the County Clerks, of payments made to Commissioners and Inspectors, being in gross sums, it is perhaps impossible exactly to ascertain; but competent judges from data obtained, in several counties, fix it at \$20, on an average, for each Inspector. We will then call it \$20, and assume farther that one-tenth of the Inspectors receive no pay. Then as there are, excluding the Cities, 2437 Inspectors, if we deduct one-tenth, and multiply the remainder by 20, as the average amount received, we have as the present cost, in money paid out, \$43,860 00

This subtracted from \$63,530, leaves \$19,670 00 as the balance against reform.

Let us now estimate what amount is paid in our villages and cities to private teachers, by the thousands of our fellow citizens, who perhaps though only able to keep want at the staff's end, still spend freely of their hard earnings to secure good schooling for their children. How vast the sum that would be saved them, if our common schools were fit seminaries of instruction. Then add to this the amount saved by greater uniformity in books, whose incessant change now taxes the parents so heavily, and call it but \$5,000 per annum for each district, and it exceeds \$50,000 more. Then calculate the cost of pauperism and crime;—the loss of productive labor by ignorance, vice and drunkenness;—the loss by disease and death;—their fearful consequences; the loss of the due benefit of the \$2,000,000 which in one form or another, our system annually costs; (2) and then suppose one hundredth part of the great total would be saved by carefully educating the five hundred and fifty-seven thousand children who throng our common schools, to habits of cheerful and intelligent industry, and even a miser will rise from the calculation, convinced that every dollar expended in giving effi-

ciency to our system, does better service than if it annually produced its weight in gold.

(1) 224 Districts only, are duly inspected—supposing them to have Summer and Winter Schools;—see extract from Superintendent's Report on the 6th page of this Journal.

(2) The total expenditure for the present year will be \$2,100,812 63—see same Report, page 11.

We hope the confident expectations, so courteously expressed in the following letters, may all be realized.—Ed.

Albany, March 16, 1840.

Dear Sir: I am rejoiced to learn that you propose the publication of a Journal devoted to the cause of Primary Education. I have no doubt that it may be, and in your hands will be, eminently useful in promoting the success of that cause. There is a vast amount of information on the subject, to which our fellow citizens generally have no access, and which can be diffused better through such a channel than any other. The improvements of other States and countries, the suggestions of those who have fully considered the various topics connected with schools, and of those practically acquainted with their operation, the knowledge of the best books, and the best modes of instruction, can thus be communicated in a manner that can not fail to be interesting and useful. Indeed my views of the importance of such a Journal, have already been expressed in the official report to the Legislature made on the 11th of February last, and to which I beg leave to refer. Any aid that I can render, officially or personally, will be cheerfully given in sustaining such a publication. And you must permit me to remark; that from a long acquaintance with you and a knowledge of your devotion to the great cause, I am of opinion that there is no person within my acquaintance who would bring to the task more ability, industry and zeal than yourself, and none in whose discretion, aided as I know you will be, I should have greater confidence.

I would therefore earnestly recommend to all the friends of Common School Education throughout the State, to take and circulate the District School Journal which you propose to publish, believing that they will be more than remunerated by the perusal of the paper, and by the happy influences it will exert upon our system of instruction and upon the execution of that system.

I am, dear sir,

truly yours,

JOHN C. SPENCER.

Francis Dwight, Esq.

Albany, 9th March, 1840.

Dear Sir: I have heard with much pleasure, that you propose to undertake the publication of a District School Journal for the benefit of the Common Schools of this State. In other States the cause of Education has been much aided by publications of this nature, and I have no doubt the same useful results would be secured here by the extensive diffusion of information concerning subjects connected with the management of Schools, the course of instruction best adapted to them, the construction of school-houses, &c. There is no way in which such information can be so well communicated as through the columns of such a paper as you propose to publish. Trusting that you will persevere in your intention, and that the publication will meet with the encouragement, which I do not doubt it will deserve.

I am, very respectfully, yours,

JOHN A. DIX.

Francis Dwight, Esq.

We are gratified that the first number of our Journal is graced by the annexed record of devoted and effective action. The Eighth has set an example which we hope will be promptly followed by the other great Districts of the State. We believe the Seventh also, has its CARY, and we trust here as well as elsewhere the great experiment may be tried, "how teachers may be secured fit for the sacred trust of educating the children of the people." Whether the Normal School is the best mode of meeting this want, we propose to consider at length in a future number; in the meantime we commend this subject to serious consideration.—Ed.

Normal School in the 8th District.

The inhabitants of Alabama and West Elba, after hearing a lecture, delivered by the Rev. D. M. Smith, Secretary of the State Society for the improvement of Education in Common Schools, determined to make an effort to raise funds for establishing a Seminary at Caryville for the education of teachers of Com. Schools in the 8th Senate District. The effort proved successful. Twenty thousand dollars, the sum proposed, being already raised; Col. A. CARY having headed the subscription with TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS. At a subsequent meeting of the inhabitants of the above towns on the 22d of January, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the plan for improving popular education in this State as embodied in the Articles of the Constitution of the New-York State Society for improving education in Common Schools, is well calculated to accomplish the object, and that the founders of the Society should be regarded as among the greatest benefactors of the country.

Resolved, That the liberal donor of \$10,000 towards the establishment of a Seminary for the education of teachers in the 8th Senate District, merits the love and honor of his fellow citizens.

Resolved, That it should be regarded as an object of the first importance to establish in the children of each generation a virtuous character, founded on the morality of the Bible and in accordance with the sentiments of our pious ancestors.

Resolved, That having commenced so noble an undertaking, we will not desist until the object is accomplished.—*Batavia Ad.*

Original Communications.

SPELLING.—No. 1.

Learning to spell, is the business of childhood, and if a child does not learn to spell correctly all common words before he enters his teens, the chance is he never will. I have long entertained this opinion, and I am glad to be able to back it by so high an authority as the Secretary of the Board of Education in Massachusetts. "One fact, says he, has been often remarked, that if children do not learn to spell pretty correctly, before the age of ten or twelve years, they rarely become good spellers afterwards."

It ought then to be a matter of attention with parents and teachers, that children do not get beyond this period, without making this valuable attainment.

In childhood, the memory is peculiarly plastic and fitted to receive that kind of instruction which addresses itself specially to this faculty. It is the faculty, which develops itself earliest. Others are later, and this circumstance should be carefully attended to in the education of children. Let there be as much attention to the proper succession of their studies, as to the succession and rotation of crops, and we shall see more fruit from their school-going.

Let spelling then be made a prominent business in the primary and district Schools. Let it not be put off, with a few words given out, in an idle sort of way, from the reading lesson, without preparation and at haphazard. This will not do. It must be made a regular thing, and the spelling lesson, whatever it be, must be carefully prepared, time must be given to hearing it, and it must be treated as a matter of grave consequence.

There is no objection to spelling from the reading lesson, if the reading lesson be carefully studied with reference to this exercise, and perhaps, after the spelling-book has been thoroughly learned, this is the best method; for if the meaning of the words spelled be required, it will secure a preparation at the same time of the lesson for reading, and tend to the improvement of that branch of education.

In that case, however, the reading lesson should be short—and indeed, it would not be a bad plan for the same paragraph of twenty or thirty lines to be read by each member of a class. The errors of the first reader being corrected, the others would be expected to read it better—and in this case as in most others, by confining the attention to a little at a time, more will on the whole be accomplished. This is the practice of some good teachers of reading; and undoubtedly, one may learn more, by attaining the ability to read well one paragraph, than by blundering over forty.

This, however, by the way. The same authority quoted in the beginning of this article, says again, "it seems to be the general opinion of the most competent observers, that the schools have retrograded within the last generation or half generation, in regard to orthography." I was very well acquainted with the inside of a common school, though a capital one of its kind, in Massachusetts, thirty years ago, and have had occasion to know how people of some pretensions to education spell now-a-days, and I confess my opinion very much coincides with that of the competent observers to whom he alludes. I have received letters from teachers sadly misspelt. I have had occasion to know, that young persons are often entering higher schools from the lower—quite learned in their own estimation in philosophy and history, and rhetoric, and such high studies distilled over and packed up in small essence bottles for their especial use, but quite unable to spell. Ah! they do not know, and their teachers do not seem to, that "inability to spell the commonly used words in our language, justly stamps the deficient mind with the stigma of illiteracy." No matter how learnedly they talk about gasses, and the planets, and association of ideas, they are illiterate if they cannot spell.

If children get beyond the common school without learning to spell, they will never do it. Their own aptitude for this kind of instruction is gone, and higher schools either make spelling a secondary object, or no object at all—and so they pass through their school days, and enter life—having failed in making one of the most valuable attainments; and they find, that though in childhood they and their parents and their teachers could make more shew out of something else than of spelling, and get them more praise: yet that now, no deficiency causes them so much mortification. How sad and yet how ridiculous, for a lady, whose parlour and whose conversation are as blue as blue can well be, to be unable to address you a brief note, without caricaturing half the words, almost beyond recognition; or, for a gentleman, whose eloquence calls forth "immense applause" at a public meeting, not to be able to prepare his speeches for the press, without mixing his figures of speech with figures of spelling, not put down in the books.

If one would not fail in this part of education, he must begin at the beginning—and his parents and teachers must see to it.

I shall be glad, Mr. Editor, to contribute my mite towards improvement in this important matter, and in another number or two, shall send you some of my thoughts on the best method of teaching children to spell, and the great value of this branch of education.

SPELMAN.

HOPE FOR SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTION.

Memory is the faculty which is first cultivated, and it is therefore vastly important that that faculty be cultivated judiciously. In almost every instance at school, it is observable that constraint, nay force, is deemed to be essential to cause a child to exercise its memory. The cause of this resistance it is very important to understand.

Economy, as the least money and time are called, forms the basis of the ordinary system of teaching, and probably, from what is also called necessity. Nine-tenths of the citizens of the United States will continue to conform to this necessity;—to direct usefully and successfully this assumed necessity, will be considered by every reflecting person to be a great object.

Nones but the wealthy can afford to employ a teacher to give an undivided attention to the disposition or temper and development of the faculties, mental and corporeal, of a child; were it possible that all children could have individually such attention, the process of instruction would undoubtedly be very different from that now pursued in Common Schools. It will not here be argued that private and individual instruction is either best or better than Common Schools; it is only intended to say that the condition of wealth, &c., just mentioned, would be followed by the improvement suggested.

Most persons have observed with what ease a child is induced to "listen to a story," and also that if it be repeated, and especially if repeated in metre, how soon the story will be impressed upon its mind, and the child become anxious, nay importunate, to repeat the story again and again to any who will listen: while also every one may have remarked with how many entreaties and explanations, and how much scolding and waste of time, nay, and use of the birch also, a child is forced to remember the form and name or sound of half a dozen letters of the Alphabet. In this last may be found the basis of the creed of Dr. Bushy, in King Charles days, when it was, as it is now, deemed essential to whip learning into children. Let me not be misunderstood, it is by no means my intention to counsel to spare the birch in the correction of vice.

The conclusion I would come to is, that to prepare the mind of a child to receive instruction, the child must be interested by understanding something of the object, and therefore the instruction should be made desirable to the child, by causing it in some degree to comprehend the object by arousing its sympathy and attention.

All this is "nothing new," but it is in proof that a mode of instruction different from that given at schools must be introduced, if mental and moral improvement, and most especially improvement of the natural temper is ever to be hoped for in this world. Much has been said of the advantages of emulation, that is, the excitement of comparative powers among children. Such a course saves time, and suits the existing condition of Schools, and no one will deny that the mental powers are or various degrees and activity; but this emulation is an erroneous substitute of invidious distinction, that tends to make it virtue for a quick intellect to know, and a vice for the slower mind to require more time. To return to the conclusion to which we before came, which amounts to this, that there exists in Nature such an arrangement of human faculties, that teaching the elements in the ordinary way impedes, by forcing attention to that which the child cannot yet understand, and thus creates an impression that learning is a punishment. This obstruction is the worst barrier to improvement.

Such a state of mind must produce continued resistance, and thus at best, instruction is forced inch by inch, until the child, by contact with the necessities of life out of school, becomes acquainted with the name and use of things, and the consequence of good and evil conduct; and now age finds him called to the duties of society, and if he be by nature of active mind, he may be found in that rare class called self-taught, who throw down the hoe and the axe, and fly to books, otherwise, he may descend to the grave with that vast multitude whose tempers and whose ignorance have not been ameliorated by cultivation.

It may not be reasonable to expect great changes in our system of instruction, and it is certain that change should only be attempted upon a thorough conviction of its necessity and its fitness. I hope others may deem this subject worthy of examination.

J. G. S.

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST? would be a troublesome question in many of our Schools—the dull drawl and the racing din are equally common and equally inconsistent with thoughtful reading. It is the utterance of a given quantity of vowels and consonants, the getting through the "verse" that concerns the child, as to its meaning, it matters not to him whether it has any. Now I am a little sceptical, how far such a faculty is a benefit, and perhaps the more a child so reads, the worse it is for him, as he is confirming habits of inattention at the outset of education, which will impede his progress both in the School-room and the world. Will you, Mr. Editor, suggest what has been found a remedy for this evil, that this parrot practice may be corrected, and our children made to realize that the faculty of reading is indeed a privilege and a blessing.

A PARENT.

Selections.

THE ENDS OF EDUCATION.

A grovelling utilitarian philosophy has degraded every human interest and pursuit.—Every thing has come to have its market-value, and is regarded as being worth just what it will bring in the mart. Nothing is esteemed for its own sake; nothing has any intrinsic worth. There are no invariable standards of excellence; all is uncertainty and fluctuation; every thing depends upon the shifting phenomena of experience, and the generalizations of expedience. In this general ebb and flow of things, the true ends of education have been entirely overlooked, and like everything else, it has been gauged, marked, and stamped as a mere commercial commodity. Its value has been determined, not by its effect to make a man wiser, better, happier, more useful; but by the increased skill it brings into the office of the lawyer, the counting-room of the merchant, the shop of the artizan, or the field of the husbandman. A sordid love of gain has displaced in the minds of men the love of the good, the true, the beautiful; and the development and perfection of the human within them, the evolution of their noble powers, the cultivation of their affections, the improvement of their sensibilities, the assimilation of their whole soul and being to God himself, are of less estimation in their eyes than a pitiable mercantile tact, or handicraft skill. Education is esteemed not for what it *is*, but for what it *produces*; not as an *end*, and the noblest end in itself, but as the means of mere outward advantage. The natural order of sentiments is entirely reversed; that which ought to be first, is last, and the last, first.

Education is its own end; like virtue, it is an ultimate good.—There is, and can be nothing to which it stands in the relation of a means, which is great enough to be its object. The development and nurture of the intellectual and moral powers, the expansion and cultivation of the domestic and social affections, the birth and growth of the whole spiritual man, are the highest ends of which it is possible to conceive. The *advantages* of education are only evidences of its own excellence; streams that flow from a fountain of good. But what are these advantages? In what do they consist? In a more wide and far-reaching prudence? A nicer and more calculating expedience? A more expert and skilful use of the faculties for purposes of interest or gain?

Sound philosophy teaches a far different lesson; that, as education is so excellent as to be its own final cause and ultimate aim, so its fruits are most excellent and noble. It is the parent of every honorable sentiment and manly virtue; it calls into exercise and action every kind and generous affection; it purifies and quickens every tender and delicate sensibility. It prepares man for his duties and relations; supplies impulses and motives to noble deeds; and inspires him with exalted and heroic resolution. What is dark in the human mind, it enlightens; what is feeble, it strengthens; what is wrong, it corrects; what is narrow, it enlarges; what is low and mean, it ennobles and exalts. It establishes a man in the truth; fixes him in permanent principles, and gives him a character of firmness and integrity. In a word,

it makes him an *entire man*. He fears God; he regards man; he reverences law; he respects government; he loves his country; he is a friend of his kind.

Such are the fruits of *real education*—and if there ever was a time when sound views of the science of education needed to be inculcated and enforced, that time is the present. The minds of men have been so long directed to things outward; they have been so long taught to look without themselves for their principles of conduct; and have become so insensible or regardless of all internal sentiments, that the distinction between right and wrong is almost entirely lost sight of, the boundaries of virtue and vice are confounded, and the whole substance of morals destroyed. A calculating expediency is substituted for the eternal principles of right and wrong; “the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal, to the noisy forum of speculative debate.” A spirit is abroad in the land, which would merge and forget the joy at the deliverance of a man from the dominion of a legion of devils, in grief and complaints at the loss of a herd of swine.

The reflective mind cannot but tremble at the prospect. For this empirical philosophy, this domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, must, ere long, if not corrected, dethrone religion, displace virtue from her foundations, and shake down the pillars of society.—*CRASS.*

REMARKS

On the Relation between Education & Crime.

It has often been remarked that instruction without the careful culture of the heart leads to immorality rather than to morality. This is undoubtedly true. Domestic education—the rearing of the young in sound morality—the fear of God—and the all-important example of virtue in their parents before their eyes—are of vital importance to every society; and can never be supplanted by any general school-system, however wisely it may be contrived. Suppose, however, domestic education in general, or with large classes, to be bad, and not only to continue thus from generation to generation, but, as there is nowhere a mental or moral standing place, to grow worse and worse, would not the school be one of the most natural means to correct this state of things, and gradually to introduce a better one? If the moral domestic education is not bad, instruction is not the less necessary. As to the alleged neglect of this important part of education in schools, the objection, if of any weight, points rather to the higher sorts of schools than to those established on a general system for the benefit of the less favoured classes of the community, who may be presumed most likely to suffer from the want of adequate moral discipline at school in consequence of being less likely to find it at home. Perhaps there is hardly a school, even the meanest, in which a child does not receive some moral instruction which may importantly influence his ultimate character and habits. A teacher cannot help enforcing some moral rules, by way of keeping order in his school-room; nor can the lessons which the children have

to read and learn, remain without instilling some moral precepts into the mind, or disposing it better for the reception of moral and religious views. Besides, there is in all knowledge, even in the most indifferent as to moral effects—for instance, arithmetic—a softening power, which renders the mind more pliable; and however inferior it may be in itself, forms one more link which connects the individual with the society in which he lives. The more we can cultivate this feeling of being linked to a society of moral beings, and to a nation in which, like others, we have duties to perform; and the more we can prevent the growth of a feeling of separation from society, or of opposition to the rest of society, the more we shall also prevent the various acts of selfishness—of absorbing egotism—of crime. This part of the subject deserves to be considered with great attention. It is, that there are no individuals more exposed to crime than those who remain ignorant in a civilized community; or, in other words, those individuals who are touched by the wants and desires of civilization, or by the effects of general refinement, without being actually within the bosom of civilization.—Ignorance, without civilization, is no peculiar source of crime; ignorance, with civilization, is an abounding source of crime, both because it lessens the means of subsistence, and because it lowers the individual in the general and his own esteem—it severs him from the instructed and educated. Instances are afforded to us in the lowest, most ignorant, and destitute classes in all large cities, who receive certain views and notions of civilization, and yet live without education and instruction. We have arrived at a state of things in which an individual who cannot read, is actually, in most respects, excluded from the great sphere of civilization; and whoever is thus excluded from the general course of civilization, is more exposed to misery, and more liable to be drawn into the snares of crime than others who are more firmly linked to society, and upon whom, therefore, shame has a greater power; and who, moreover, find it easier to gain a livelihood in an honest way.

The best test we possess, by which to estimate the effect of education in preventing crime, is by ascertaining the degree of education which every convict has obtained. If we should find that, in a country in which few individuals grow up without some school instruction, an immense majority of convicts are men who have not received a fair school education—if thus ignorance almost wholly accompanies crime—and if at the same time it is easy to account for the connexion between the two, on general and simple grounds, drawn from the nature of our mind and of human society in general, we are surely authorized to conclude that there actually does exist a necessary connexion between the two, and that by diffusing knowledge of a moral and scientific character, we may hope for a decrease of crime.

In accordance with this view, Dr. Lieber addressed a series of queries to the wardens of the principal penitentiaries, with the view of learning the state of the convicts with regard to education. He found that there was no warden or superintendent of any penitentiary of note who did not consider want of education and ignorance as the most active

agents in producing crime; and he states the following as the general conclusions in which his inquiries have resulted:—

1. Deficient education, early loss of parents, and consequent neglect, are some of the most fruitful sources of crime.
2. That few convicts have ever learned a regular trade, and if they were apprenticed to any business they have abandoned it before the time had lawfully expired.
3. That school education is, with most convicts, very deficient or entirely wanting.
4. That intemperance, which is very often the cause of loose education, is a most appalling source of crime.
5. That by preventing intemperance, and by promoting education, we are authorized to believe that a considerable diminution of crime would be effected.

The answers given by some of the superintendents of state prisons to the queries of Dr. Lieber are printed in the Appendix; and from them we have made the following extracts:

The first is from Mr. Wiltse, Agent of Sing-Sing State Prison. He prefaced the required return by these observations:—

"Whatever may be the fact in other countries, there can be little doubt that education and early application to some kind of business would have a powerful tendency to decrease crime. From my long intimacy with criminals, I have found that a large majority of convicts may be traced to the formation of bad habits in early life, and from a total neglect on the part of their parents or guardians, in giving them education and confining their attention to some regular systematic business. You will observe, in the following return, that only fifty prisoners out of 842 have received anything like an education."

"There are at present 842 prisoners:
170 prisoners cannot read nor write.
34 " have never been at any kind of school.
85 " know how to read, but not to write.
610 " know how to read and write, but a large proportion of them do it very imperfectly.
42 " received a good common English education.
8 " went through a college.
485 " have been habitual drunkards; about one third of the above number actually committed their respective crimes when intoxicated."

The answer from the Rev. B. C. Smith, the chaplain of Auburn State Prison, furnishes very full and interesting information, of which the following is an abstract.

The number of prisoners is 670; and the first statement describes their circumstances as to education.

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Of collegiate education, | 3 |
| Of academical education, | 8 |
| Of common education, | 304 |
| Of very poor education, | 267 |
| Without any education, | 185 |

In the new Penitentiary in Philadelphia, of 217 prisoners, 63 can neither read or write, 60 can read only, and the remaining 85 can read and write, but the most of them very indifferently. The Chaplain of the Ohio Penitentiary says the prisoners are generally ignorant and uninformed.

"Four ignorant creatures, Sir," said the jailer of an English prison to Leigh Hunt, in that phrase giving a general description of all his prisoners. Mr. Hume stated that one quarter sessions in the single town of Manchester, sent more felons to the plantations than all the Scotch judges in a twelve-month."

This is but a small part of the evidence that might be brought forward. But is it not enough to satisfy us that a great part of the crime expiated in our jails, might be prevented by the early and faithful instillation of virtuous dispositions and sound knowledge.—Dr. LIEBER.

STATE REPORTS ON EDUCATION.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

I. The Condition of the Common Schools of the State.

1. The number of School Districts.

The number of these on the 31st day of December, 1838, from which reports were received by the commissioners was,

| | |
|---|-------|
| Whole districts, | 7,983 |
| Parts of districts, | 4,288 |
| Assuming two parts to make a whole, | 2,144 |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total number reporting, | 10,127 |
| The number reported on the 31st December, 1837, was | 9,830 |

Showing an increase during the year 1838, of 297

The number stated by the commissioners as existing on the first day of July, 1839, was

| | |
|---|-------|
| Whole districts, | 8,488 |
| Parts, | 4,436 |
| Assuming 2 parts to make a whole dist., | 2,218 |

10,706

The number in 1837, of districts estimated in the same way, was 10,583

Showing an increase of 123

As some of the joint districts consist of parts of two towns, others of three, and others of four towns, it is impossible to state accurately the whole number of districts. The usual practice has been to consider two parts as making a district: and this is the nearest approximation to accuracy that can be obtained.

2. The number of children who are the proper subjects of instruction, the number instructed, and the average term of tuition.

Returns are required of the number of children over five and under sixteen years of age, as being of the description most likely to be sent to the common schools, and most proper to be there instructed. The reports referred to show, that on the 31st of December, 1838, there were of this description of children, 564,790

The number of the same description of children on the 31st December, 1837, was 539,747

Showing an increase of 25,043

But this result cannot be relied on. From the city of New-York no return is made of the number of children between the specified ages. From a calculation based on the census of 1835, there were in that year more than 55,000 children, between 5 and 16, in that city. The number reported in other cities must be conjectural, and from investigations made by gentlemen who instituted inquiries for the purpose, it is believed that the reports from the cities have very little approximation to accuracy. All averages founded upon such data must be erroneous. But as they have been ordinarily given, the Superintendent proceeds to state, that the average number of children between 5 and 16 years of age, in each district out of the city of New-York, in 1835, as calculated upon the reports, is 56.

The number of children reported as having been instructed in the Common Schools during the year 1838, is 557,229
The number instructed in 1837, was 528,913

Showing an increase during the year 1838, of 28,316

The average number that attended school in each district, in 1838, was 55. In 1837, it was 53 79-98.

The average term during which schools were taught by qualified teachers, during 1838, was 8 months.

In the city of New-York, schools were kept the whole year; in the county of Kings, they were kept an average term of eleven months; in each of the counties of Queens, Richmond and Rockland, an average of ten months; and in each of the counties of Albany, Columbia, Montgomery, Orange and Westchester, an average term of nine months.

3. Inspection of the Schools.

By section 52 of the School Act, it is made the duty of the inspectors of common schools, (including commissioners,) to visit each school that is organized within their town. The trustees are required to report the number of these inspections.—And from the reports it appears that during the year 1838,

| | |
|---|-------|
| 4,397 dist's & parts of dis's were insp'd once, | 1,441 |
| do. do. twice, | do. |

| | | |
|-----|-----|------------------------|
| 300 | do. | do. three times. |
| 207 | do. | do. four times. |
| 17 | do. | do. more than 4 times. |

The number of whole districts inspected was 4,333; The number of parts of districts inspected was 2,039; So that there were left of whole districts not inspected, 4,155 And of parts of districts not inspected, 2,249; And taking two parts to form a whole there is to be added to the above, 1,124

Leaving whole districts not inspected, 5,279 out of 10,127 reported by the commissioners, being one-half, and more, of all the districts in the State not visited at all by the official inspectors.

From the reports of 1837 it appears that only 5,013 districts were inspected at all during the year, leaving 5,570 that were not visited. There has been a slight improvement in this respect, in 1838; but still in that year more than one-half of all the districts were not inspected. This lamentable neglect is one of the greatest evils under which the system labors. It has been endeavored, during the past year, to mitigate it by the appointment of visitors in the different counties, under the authority given by the act of the last session.

(To be continued, in future numbers.)

LIGHT READING.

The following extract is from the very able Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education in the State of Massachusetts, for the present year. The Report is devoted principally to the consideration of District School Libraries, and in the course of the discussion, the able author gives the results of extensive enquiries—"what books there are accessible to the great mass of the children in the State, adapted to their moral and intellectual wants, and fitted to nourish their minds with the elements of uprightness and wisdom." The Report contains tabular statements of the number of social libraries in each county—with the number of volumes—their estimated value—and the number of persons having access to them in their own right. As the result of the whole, it appears that there are in the State of Massachusetts, 299 social Libraries, containing 180,028 volumes, of the estimated value of \$191,538—and that 25,705 persons have access to them in their own right. Of these 180,028 volumes, it appears that almost one-half belong to the social libraries in the City of Boston, and that only about one-tenth of the population of the city have a right of access to them. Adding to the social libraries, the libraries of the Colleges and other Literary institutions in Massachusetts, it appears "that the aggregate of volumes in the public libraries of all kinds in the State, is about 300,000," and that to these, only one-seventh part of the population have any right of access.

The aggregate of books, then, in all the

public libraries of the State of Massachusetts, in which exist two of the largest libraries in the United States, viz. the Athenæum, of Boston, and the library of Harvard College, each containing not far from 50,000 volumes, is not equal to many single libraries in some of the poorer States of Europe.

It appears from the enquiries of Mr. Mann, that there are one hundred towns in Massachusetts, "which have neither a town, social nor district school library therein." And from what we have given above from this interesting document will appear also, "the inequalities with which the means of knowledge are spread over the State."

Such are some of the grounds on which the Secretary builds the best argument we have seen, in favour of District School Libraries. Others are the unfitness of almost all the books, which are found in these libraries for the use of children. From this part of the Report, we select the following remarks in relation to a class of books, the most seductive, and from their cheapness among the most easily obtained. They are of great value in relation to the present effort to promote District School libraries, and every parent may find in them much useful instruction in reference to the reading of his own children.—Ed.

"Another very considerable portion of these libraries, especially where they have been recently formed or replenished, consists of novels and all that class of books, which is comprehended under the familiar designations of "fictions," "light reading," "trashy works," "ephemeral," or "bubble literature," &c. This kind of books has increased immeasurably, within the last twenty years. It has insinuated itself into public libraries and found the readiest welcome with people, who are not dependent upon libraries for the books they peruse. Aside from newspapers, I am satisfied that the major part of the *unprofessional* reading of the community is of the class of books, above designated. Amusement is the object; mere amusement, as contradistinguished from instruction in the practical concerns of life; as contradistinguished from those intellectual and moral impulses, which turn the mind, both while reading and after the book is closed, to observation and comparison and reflection upon the great realities of existence.

That reading merely for amusement, has its fit occasions and legitimate office, none will deny. The difficulty of the practical problem consists in adhering to that line of reasonable indulgence, which lies between mental dissipation, on the one hand, and a denial of all relaxation on the other. Life is too full of solemn duties to be regarded as a long play-day; while incessant toil lessens the ability for useful labor. In feeble health, or after sickness, or severe bodily or mental labor, an amusing, captivating, enlivening book, which levies no tax upon the powers of thought for the pleasure it gives, is a delightful resource. It is medicinal to the sick, and recuperative to the wearied mind. Es-

pecially is this the case, where a part only of the faculties have been intensely exerted. Then, to stimulate those which have lain inactive, brings the quickest relief to those which have been laboring. It is not repose to them, merely; but repose, as it were, tranquilized by music. But the difference is altogether incalculable and immense, between reading such books as an amusement only, and reading them as restorers from fatigue or as soothers in distress; between indulging in them, as a relaxation or change from deep mental engrossment, and making their perusal a common employment or business. One enervates, the other strengthens and restores; one disables from the performance of duty, the other is one of the readiest preparations for a return to it. In reading merely for amusement, the mind is passive, acquiescent, recipient, merely. The subjects treated are not such as task its powers of thought. It has no occasion to bring forth and re-examine its own possessions; but it is wafted unresistingly along, through whatever regions the author chooses to bear it. It is this passiveness, this surrendering of the mind, that constitutes the pernicious influence of reading for amusement, when carried to excess; because a series, a reiteration of efforts is just as indispensable, in order to strengthen any faculty of the intellect, as a series of muscular exercises is, to strengthen any limb of the body,—and in reading for amusement, these efforts are not made. Even when we read the most instructive books, and transfer to our own minds the knowledge they contain, the work is but half done. Most of their value consists in the occasions they furnish to the reader, to exert all his own vigor upon the subject, and through the law of mental association, to bring all his own faculties to act upon it. A stream of thought from his own mind should mingle with the stream that comes from the book. Such reading creates ability, while it communicates knowledge. The greatest accumulation of facts, until the comparing and the foreseeing faculties have acted upon them, is as useless as a telescope or a watch would be, in the hands of a savage. Single ideas may be transferred from an author to a reader, but habits of thinking are intransmissible; they must be formed within the reader's own mind, if they are ever to exist there. Actual observation, within its field, is better than reading, but the advantage of reading consists in its presenting a field, almost infinitely larger and richer, than any actual observation can ever do;—yet, if the reader does not take up the materials presented, and examine them one by one, and learn their qualities and relations, he will not be able to work them into any productions of his own;—he will be like a savage who has passed through the length of a civilized country and just looked at its machinery, its ships and houses, who, when he returns home, will not be able to make a better tool, or build a better canoe, or construct a better cabin than before. It is his own hand-work, on the materials of his art, which, after thousands of trials and experiments, at last turns the rude apprentice into such an accomplished artisan, that his hand instantaneously obeys his will, and in executing the most ingenious works, he loses the consciousness of volition; and so it is by energetic, long-continued mental application

to the elements of thought, that the crude and meager conceptions of a child are refined, and expanded, and multiplied into the sound judgment and good sense of a man of practical wisdom. Something, without doubt, is referrible to the endowments of nature, but with the mass of men, much more is attributable to that richest of all nature's endowments, the disposition to self-culture, through patient, long-sustained effort. No man, therefore, who has not made these efforts, times innumerable, and profited in each succeeding case, by the error or imperfection of the preceding, has any more right to expect the possession of wisdom, discretion, foresight, than the novice in architecture or in sculpture has to expect, that, in his first attempt, he shall be able to equal the Church of St. Peter's, or chisel a perfect statue of Apollo. Now the bane of making amusement the sole object of one's reading, and the secret of its influence in weakening the mind, consist in its superseding or discarding all attendant exertion on the part of the reader. Without this exertion, the power of clear, orderly, coherent thought,—the power of seeing whether means have been adapted to ends,—becomes inactive, and at length withers away, like a palsied limb; while, at the same time,—the attention being hurried over a variety of objects, between which nature has established no relations,—a sort of volatility or giddiness is inflicted upon the mind, so that the general result upon the whole faculties, is that of weakness and faintness combined.

What gives additional importance to this subject is the fact, that by far the most extensive portion of this reading for amusement, consists of the perusal of fictitious works.—The number of books and articles, which, under the names of romances, novels, tales in verse or prose,—from the elaborate work of three volumes to the hasty production of three chapters or three pages,—is so widespread and ever-renewing, that any computation of them transcends the power of the human faculties. They gush from the Printing-Press. Their authors are a nation.—When speaking of the reading public, we must be understood, with reference to the subject-matter of the reading. In regard to scientific works on government, political economy, morals, philosophy, the reading public is very small. Hardly one in fifty, amongst the adults, belongs to it. For works of biography, travels, history, it is considerably larger. But in reference to fictitious works, it is large and astonishingly active. It requires so little acquaintance with our language, and so little knowledge of sublimity and their relations, to understand them; and the inconvenience of failing to understand a word, a sentence or a page is so trivial;—so exactly do they meet the case of minds, that are ignorant, indolent and a little flighty, that they are welcomed by vast numbers. Other books are read slowly, commenced, laid aside, resumed, and perused in intervals of leisure. These are run through with almost incredible velocity.—Take a work on morals, of the same size with a novel; the reading of the former will occupy a month, the latter will be despatched without intervening sleep.—From Report of Sec. of the Board of Education of Massachusetts.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

For our Young Friends.

ANECDOTES OF THE ORIGIN OF WORDS.

FIRST ARTICLE.

We suggest the occasional use of these "Anecdotes" by the teacher to awaken the interest of the pupil in familiar things. Show him in this manner how those mere abstractions, words, are in their origin and history interesting subjects of study, and he will soon generalize the fact, and search for the sweet fruit of knowledge even among the husks of common things. When this point is gained, almost all is gained, for the love of knowledge is excited and its guidance alone is necessary.—Ed.

If one turns up Dr. Johnson, or any other grave etymologist, the term *Neve* is found ascribed to the Latin *nevus*, new. We cannot help admitting that this derivation is a very probable one; still he must certainly have been an ingenious and clever fellow who hit upon another way of accounting for the origin of the word, by representing, namely, as compounded of the first letters of the cardinal points, North, East, West, and South; whereby it is to be understood, that *neve* signifies information from all quarters. This is a good idea, and worthy of note, though it be fanciful. The word *Sarcasm* has a fearful derivation. It comes from the Greek *sarkao*, to pick the flesh off; and, in truth, sarcasm may be justly said to pick the flesh, not off the body, but off the mind—if such an expression is allowable. Does any of our readers know what is the origin or derivation of the word *Gas*? If any one of these same readers is sitting by the fireside—for the nights are now chill—and is engaged in going over the Journal aloud, for the benefit of a dear little domestic circle, let him lay down the paper upon his knee, and put the question around—Who can tell the derivation of the word *Gas*? And if no one can say, as may very readily be the case, since Todd's Johnson merely calls it a "word invented by the chemists," then let him read on, and let them know that the term *gas* springs from the same source as *ghost* or *ghost*, both being from a Teutonic word signifying spirit or supernatural being, and variously spelt, *gast*, *ghast*, or otherwise, according to the different Teutonic dialects. Now, some of the mineral springs of Germany exhale a vapour, which hangs above them in the semblance of a light thin cloud. This being seen, was occasionally taken for a *ghost* or *ghost*, but those who had a little more wit at their finger ends, knew the thing to be neither more nor less than a vapour. From this deceptive appearance, however, arose the custom of applying the term *ghost* to all vapours or aeriform bodies, and, being adopted by the continental chemists, the word soon became universal in this sense. Upon the same principle which led us to call the Pope a bridge-maker, we might say our streets are lighted with *ghosts*! By the bye, may not this circumstance of vapour arising from natural springs, under certain states of the atmosphere, be the origin, source, and foundation, of all the *white ladies* that ever haunted wells, from the Naiads of old Greece, to that beautiful apparition that flitted for a moment before the gaze of the last lord of Ravenswood, when, in fulfilment of his sad doom, he sought to win the heart and hand of the unhappy Bride of Lammermoor!

The word *calamity* has a very curious origin. It is derived from *calamus*, a Latin word signifying a reed, and also a stalk of corn. Now, the Romans, in their early days, before they became attached to much less praiseworthy pursuits, were great farmers, and reckoned a storm which destroyed their crops one of the heaviest possible misfortunes. On a storm of this kind, from the nature of the property which it chiefly injured, they bestowed the name of *calamity*, and in the course of time they applied the term to all mischiefs whatsoever. *League*, in the sense of a union or association, is a word of uninteresting etymology, but it is otherwise when it signifies a measured space—three miles. Formerly, it must be understood, *white stones* used to be placed at the end of every three miles upon the republic's highways—for we cannot say in this case the *king's* highways—in each of the states of Greece, much with the same view, we suppose, as our own milestones are put up. The word for *white*, in Greek, is *leukos*; and from *leukos*, according to the most probable etymology, came the word *league*.

Emolument is a word derived from a humble source. It comes from *mola*, the Latin for a mill, and at first denoted the miller's profit or culture, but by and by came to signify gain of any kind, to whomsoever it fell. *Conspirators* is the next term to which we have to allude, and few words have a more expressive origin. It springs from *spira*, to breathe, and *con*, together; and no doubt the Romans, who applied the word conspirators in its present sense, intended to express by it that plotters are obliged to breathe or whisper their purposes to each other for fear of detection. *Talents* unquestionably originated in the employment of the word in the New Testament, to signify the gifts bestowed by the Creator on man. *Suffrage* is a remarkable word. Its present meaning, we need scarcely observe, is the vote and voice of a person given at an election, or to decide any controverted point. It springs originally from the Latin *suffragus*, which signifies—what does the reader think? the joint of a beast's leg? What earthly connexion, it may well be asked, has the leg of a horse, a cow, a pig, or any other animal, with a human being's vote? Why, the camel bends its suffragus, or its knee-joint, to permit its rider to mount; and, figuratively speaking, a mounting spirit receives a similar favour from those who help him on his course by their vote. From the resemblance of the camel's condition to that of a supporting elector, as a vote called his *suffrage*, through the imaginative genius of some word-cleaver.

The Roman soldiers, at some period of that people's history, received part of their pay in kind, and in their own language. This custom gave rise to the word *Salary*, a synonym for stipend. We use the verb to *immolate*, in the same sense as *sacrifice*. It does not, however, primarily signify "to slay a victim," but to sprinkle its head, before it was slaughtered, with barley-flour and salt. This composition of flour was called *mola*, probably from the word signifying a mill. All etymologists admit the word *Rival* to be derived from *riuus*, the Latin for a river or brook. But it is not so clear how the derivative word came to have the sense of antagonist or opponent. The most simple conjecture is, that the term *Rival* was at first applied to persons who had properties on different sides of a stream, and were thus kindly opposed to each other. Others imagine that it arose from the contests of those who feed their flocks near the same stream, about the possession

of the water. But the best account, we think, of the matter, is that given by a French writer, which we now translate.—"The term *Rivals* properly designated those who had rights of fishery in one and the same stream; and as these rights were often the subject of dispute between the parties, the signification of *rivals* was ultimately extended to all who had conflicting pretensions to any thing."

The derivation assigned to the word *Crocodile* is very fanciful. It is traced in *croco*, saffron, and *delion*, fearing; in allusion to which roots old Fuller quaintly remarks, that "crocodiles' tears are never true, save when he is forced where saffron grows, knowing himself to be all poison, and it to be all antidote; whence he is called the saffron-fearer." Other derivations, also, are mentioned, but we must take leave to regard them all as equally doubtful with the statement that the crocodile has the faculty of shedding tears in the excess of his emotions.

We are not very sure if our juvenile friends will be at all disposed to acquiesce in the appropriateness of the derivation of the word *School*. Its root is said to be the Greek word *scholē*, ease; and the freedom from bodily toils, of those who engaged in the pursuits of learning, is held to have originated the term *school*. "Times are changed," we think we hear some hopeful youngsters say; "the body is not now so free from toil, and trouble, and sore annoy, as all that comes to." But let that pass; the female will disappear. People have often attempted to analyze the word *Genius*. Its etymology, we imagine, settles that very fairly. It is from *genitus*, the Latin for generated or born; and therefore the original meaning of *genius*, seems to be "that which is born with us." We must confess, however, that it is often a difficult matter to tell what qualities are natural to a man, and what are acquired—unless, indeed, phrenology is resorted to in the matter, which is a proceeding the world does not appear to be inclined in all cases to adopt. *Caprice*, a word signifying something freakish, fanciful, whimsical, is understood to come from the Latin *Capere*, a goat—an animal which is said occasionally to display, upon the mountainous slopes where it browses, a peculiar friskiness of temperament—a tendency to kick up its heels, and to perform other humorous feats, which fully justify the derivation from its name of the word under consideration. *Capere*—the English word—is doubtless from the same source. *Congruity* is a word that properly signifies "a coming well together." It is compounded of *con*, together, and *grus*, a crane; cranes being remarkable for their regularity and uniformity, when flocking together for the purpose of migration. This is the true etymology of the word *congruity*.

Few persons, we should suppose, have thought much about the origin of the word *Funeral*. This gloomy term signifies, in the original Latin, a rope end, being derived from the word *funis*, a rope. Burials, among the Romans, were anciently solemnized by torch-light, and the torches were composed of cord or rope, with wax and resin about them. Hence the term *Funeral*. *Mausoleum* is a word of congenial meaning. It originated in the circumstance of a widowed queen of old erecting a splendid tomb over the remains of her husband, whose name was *Mausolus*. The tomb was admired, and the name, in a monumental character, perpetuated. *Stipulate* is a word derived from *stipula*, the Latin for a straw. This is a point admitted, but in other respects the etymology is dubious. One author says that, in claiming, buying or mortgaging ground, straws were used or exchanged, to represent the ground; and therefore such a transaction was called a stipulation. Other authors say that the ancients, in entering into mutual engagements, broke straws, and that the subsequent junction of the straws denoted the recognition of the contract. Whatever may be the way in which straws were used in making contracts, certain it is that they were used in many countries; and hence the phrase *stipulation* originated.—Chambers' Journal.

MEANINGS OF PROPER NAMES.

All-bright is the interpretation of the Saxon name *Albert*, and *all-peace* that of *Alfred*. Besides its pleasing character as far as sound is concerned, the last of these names ought to be held in peculiar reverence in a land that traces to an Alfred the institution of trial by jury. *Alphonso* is the Latinized or rather Spanish form of the Gothic *Alfonsus*, our help. *Arthur* is from the ancient British, and signifies *mighty*. The semi-fabulous hero of the Round Table first made the name famous, and it has been aptly borne by the greatest of modern captains, Arthur Duke of Wellington. *Charles*, from the German, signifies *self-strengthened*. It is an excellent standard name, one of the best of the familiar ones. One of the greatest men who ever bore it was Charles the Great, whose name and title the French fused into *Charlemagne*, with their usual passion for changes of this kind. *Edgar* (happy honour), *Edmund* (happy peace), and *Edward* (happy ward or keeper), are all Saxon names, of an agreeable, manly order. *Edwin*, though sentimentalized to the verge of namby-pambyism by Beattie, is a good Saxon name, with a good meaning, happy winner. *Francis*, one of our most unobjectionable common names, signifies frank and free. *Fredrick* has the sense of rich peace. *Gilbert*, in the Saxon, has the meaning of bright pledge; and what meaning could be more delightful to a parent than this? The name is hallowed by the sweet little story told of the mother of Thomas-a-Becket. His father, when a young man, served in the Crusades, and, being taken prisoner, saw and loved the daughter of the Emir who was his captor. After a time, Becket escaped and came home. The Emir's daughter followed him to England, and went from place to place, and street to street, calling out Gilbert!—being the only word of English she knew. This was her talisman, the anchor of her hope; and she was finally seen by Gilbert Becket, who took the faithful alien to his home and his bridal bed. She became the mother, as has been said, of the famous churchman. *Godfrey* signifies God's peace, and *Godwin* victorious in God, both good names. *Henry* is derived from German words signifying rich lord.—*Hugh* is a German word with the rather extraordinary meaning of hough, to lame or hamstring. Some mighty warrior, famous for houghing his enemies, probably bore the appellation first. It is not unworthy of remark, that there is a particular form of the name *Hugh* amongst the Scotch family of the Dalrymples. It is borne by many of them as *Hew*, in consequence, it is said, of a certain adventure of an ancient warrior of their clan, who bore this Christian name. When he was defending a rocky pass, on which the life of a king depended, he was encouraged in his Herculean labour by the voice of royalty calling to him, "Hew! hew!" a word which he afterwards thought proper to adopt as his name, instead of the ordinary appellation. The arms of the family bear reference to this legend. *Humphrey* signifies, in German, home

peace. Some years ago, a person on the continent, a Frenchman in all likelihood, sent a letter to Britain, with the following address: "To Schomphredvi, London." Some time elapsed ere the postoffice people could hit on the meaning of this, but finally one ingenious person suggested "Sir Humphrey Davy" as the explanation of the strange word; and so, on inquiry, it proved to be. Undoubtedly, "Schomphred" was one of the most illustrious men who ever held the name.—*Lewis*, otherwise *Louis*, and in the feminine *Louisa*, is from the German name, and denotes refuge of the people, in its original form of *Ludowick*. *Morgan*, a good name, is from the ancient British, and denotes a mariner. *Richard* has the noble sense of rich heart, and *Robert* the equally fine one of bright counsel. These are a pair of the best familiars, and are halloved by many grand recollections. The lion-hearted monarch of old England, the not less lion-hearted Bruce of old Scotland, with Robin Hood and Robin Burns, are but a few of those who have consecrated these names, the first of which is from the Saxon and the other from the German. A plucky, sturdy name is our next—*Roger*, signifying strong counsel. *Friar Bacon*, the inventor of gunpowder, an extraordinary man for his age, was a *Roger*. *Walter* and *William*, two German names, signifying respectively a woodman and a defender of man, are standard denominations among baptized men, and deservedly so. *Raleigh* was a man who did no disgrace to *Walter*, and *William* we must hold to be the most fortunate of all names, for he who wrote and lived

"Not for an age, but for all time,"

was a *William*.—Chambers' Journal.

CUNNING OF THE SPIDER.

A degree of the marvelous has characterized the stories of the sagacity of this animal that we do not attempt to reach; a simple exhibition of it, however, fell under our observation some two or three days since, which we will relate.—A spider, of moderate size, had fortified himself within a very formidable web in a corner of our office, where he was suffered to remain, for no other reason than his predilection for musquitoes. His taste for variety, however, was very soon developed. We observed him, a morning or two since, making very rapid preparations to attack an enormous beetle, whose peregrinations had extended into his neighborhood. The web was made fast to two of his legs at the first onset. Mr. Beetle, apparently not altogether satisfied with this "fraternal hug," bade him good morning, and marched off, carrying his chains with him. In doing which he had well nigh demolished the fortress itself. In a few moments, however, the beetle repeated his visit. In the meantime, the spider had repaired damages, and was prepared for the reception of the formidable stranger. The web was about eighteen inches from the floor; the spider precipitated himself from it, but stopped suddenly when within about two inches of the floor. As this feat was again and again repeated, we have no doubt that it was an experiment to try the strength of his cord. At length he threw himself upon the back of the beetle, attached the web to the posterior extremities, and then retreated. Mr. Beetle's surprise at the purity of the intentions of his long-legged host were now confirmed, and, apparently, with no small degree of displeasure, he turned his back upon the spider, the frailty of whose web, notwithstanding his precaution, not interfering in the slightest degree with the dignity of Sir Beetle's measured tread. The spider, convinced that open attack was altogether unavailable, resorted to stratagem. With rather an eccentric manoeuvre, he fastened the attention of Mr. Beetle upon himself, and then commenced a retreat up the surface of the web, the spider for politeness, under the impression that he was conducting him to his castle, or whether it was a matter of sheer curiosity that induced him to follow his betrayer, we are not able to decide; it is sufficient that the decoy was successful. Mr. Spider was vastly civil to Sir Beetle; court language was used on the occasion, without doubt, until they reached a point directly over the web, when, like another Roderick Dhu, he threw off his disguise, and, in a trice, mounted upon the back of Sir Beetle, disengaged his feet from the wall, and they tumbled together into the web. With the rough legs of the beetle, and being unable to obtain foothold, extrication was impossible, escape hopeless; he surrendered at discretion, and at the following evening, was found dead in his chains.

FREAKS OF VIRTUE.

In our judgment of men, we are to beware of giving any great importance to occasional acts. By acts of occasional virtue, weak men endeavour to redeem themselves in their own estimation, vain men to exalt themselves in that of mankind. It may be observed, that there are no men more worthless and selfish in the general tenor of their lives, than some who from time to time perform feats of generosity. Sentimental selfishness will commonly vary its indulgences in this way, and vain glorious selfishness will break out into acts of munificence. But self-government and self-denial are not to be relied upon for any real strength, except in so far as they are found to be exercised in detail.

A gentleman of Hentley-on-Thames offered a farmer, when at the market a dinner and a bottle of wine, if he would bring him a grain of wheat on the following market-day, and double the quantity each week until that day twelvemonth. This was accepted for the moment; but the following statement will perhaps satisfy those who have never entered into any similar calculations of the impossibility of fulfilling such an engagement:—Amount of the number of grains, 4,503,599,627,370,495; number of bushels, 12,509,998,964; number of quarters, 1,563,749,870; number of loads, 312,749,974.

TRANSPPOSITION OF LETTERS.

By the transposition of letters, fifty nine words can be made from one word containing seven letters, and being two syllables, namely, *Remains*—the words are, main, aim, rain, man, ream, name, mire, remain, men, rein, same, ran, sam, smear, ire, ram, is, arm, ear, an, air, rim, seam, am, mar, zen, in, me, are, mane, sir, mare, ain, raise, sire, arms, rime, awise, raise, rear, rinse, aries, earn, i, arise, inseam, manes, names, marine, misse, resin, miner, snare, sea, mine, sane, mien, manse, amen!

STOW & FRAZEE, PRINTERS, GENEVA, N. Y.

the mean - rise - mars - main
mean - brim - era - near
main - non - live - af